

STATUS OF CHILD WELL-BEING AMONG RURAL FAMILIES IN MANMUNAI SOUTH WEST DS DIVISION OF BATTICALOA DISTRICT: IMPACT OF AN AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOOD PROJECT

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ABSTRACT: Sustainable livelihood development projects are a vital modern method in fighting against poverty and reducing unemployment. An agricultural livelihood project had been implemented by the World Vision Lanka, a non-governmental organization in Manmunai South West Divisional Secretariat Division of Batticaloa District during the period 2010 – 2015. The project was channeled through four activities; family development, goat rearing, cattle rearing and poultry development in all Grama Niladhari divisions. The present study was implemented with the objective to identify the extent to which the implemented agricultural livelihood project changes the child well-being status among the people. Questionnaires were administered to 100 randomly selected project beneficiaries through personal interview in five GN Divisions. Collected data were analyzed by using SPSS. The results reveal that majority of the beneficiaries have succeeded in their income generating activities. Significant satisfaction reported for goat and cattle rearing. Child well-being indicators changed positively in comparison with the status before the implementation of the project. Further, beneficiaries are satisfied about the well-being of their children. The said income generating activities need to be intensified to sustain the present status. Therefore, relevant authorities should take needed actions to intensify the income generating activities of the rural populace in the area.

Keywords: Income generating activities, Primary education, Project beneficiary, School enrollment

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has been the mainstay of the Sri Lankan economy with one-thirds of the population being dependent on it (Sandika and Dushani, 2009). The extent and nature of poverty in the rural communities has led to the implementation of a range of development project aimed at improving rural livelihood (Sidsel *et al.*, 2011). Thus, many of the projects have been implemented with the argument that future economic, social, and environmental development in the rural communities (May, 1999). Poverty affects large proportions of the population in the rural areas in Sri Lanka and is being reflected from a sense of deprivation and inability to gain sufficient income to meet basic needs (Diprose *et al.*, 2010).

The livelihood project implemented by the World Vision Lanka is a feasible approach in reducing poverty level among the rural population. The project had been implemented by the World Vision Lanka in Manmunai South West DS Division of Batticaloa district with a funding assistance from World Vision (WV) Australia. The livelihood program goals for the financial year 2010 - financial year 2015 were to uplift the living standard of the communities by empowering them to mobilize people's participation to engage in development projects ensuring a transformed and sustainable life.

The livelihood Program's interventions were channeled through four projects: "Family Development Plan (FDP)", "Goat village", "Cattle rearing" and "poultry development" program in the area. The FDP supports to these very deprived families through different activities: Home gardening, fishing, small shop, rice from paddy business, popcorn making, rice flour making and curd making. Through this livelihood project nearly 706 families had been

engaged in livelihood support activities. Assessing the impact of the project can ensure its nature of success. Taken this into account, the present study was carried out to identify the impact of this livelihood project on the status of child well-being among the rural families in the area.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in five Grama Niladhari divisions under the Manmunai South West DS division of Batticaloa District. The total number of families in Manmunai South West DS division is 7270. Among those, 706 families were selected from all GN divisions for the particular livelihood project by the World Vision Lanka. Those selected 706 families were assisted with four different livelihood activities (Table 1). Major five GN divisions based on the high number of beneficiaries were selected for the present study. The selected GN divisions were Mavadinmari, Pandariyaveli, Kuluvnamadu, Kadukamunai and Katchenai. From the selected GN divisions, a total of 100 project beneficiaries were randomly selected for this study purpose. Details of total and selected number of beneficiaries with regard to the assistance provided are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Total and selected number of beneficiaries

Project category	Total number of beneficiaries	Selected number of beneficiaries
Family Development Plan	371	50
Goat village	210	30
Cattle rearing	74	10
Backyard chicken	51	10

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3. 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Beneficiaries

Socio-economic parameters of the selected beneficiaries are shown in table 2. It is apparent from the table that more than half of the project beneficiaries belong to middle age category, females and completed their primary education. Majority of female beneficiaries had been included in the project mainly because of the reason that they receive low daily wages compared to male and with less educational level. The findings are in accordance with the findings of Vidya (2010), Ratnayake (2015) and Thillainathan (2010) who reported that more than half of the beneficiaries in majority of the livelihood projects implemented in the developing countries are female.

The mean value of education level was 4.88 years of schooling but despite the illiteracy level, communities in the study area have very good ideas and intention for improving their livelihoods and moving out of poverty. In the study area, rural people were less interested in continuing their education because of poverty and less availability of educational institutes. The result is supported by the findings of Arunatilake & Jayawardena (2010). Sandika and Hirimuthugoda (2011) stated in their study that the education level found to be low, with a majority (56%) studied up to primary (Grade 5) level in rural areas of Sri Lanka. It was also observed during this study that majority of the respondents completed their primary education. Siriwardana and Jayawardena (2015) found that, farmers' level of education varied from no formal education up to GCE Advanced Level education in Sri Lanka.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their demographic nature

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)		
Young age (lower than 35 years)	10	10
Middle age(36-45 years)	54	54
Old age (More than 45 years)	36	36
Gender		
Male	42	42
Female	58	58
Education level		
Illiterate	12	12
Primary	62	62
Secondary	20	20
Tertiary	06	06
Family size		
Small Family (1 to 3 members)	42	42
Medium Family (4 to 5 members)	50	50
Large Family (More than 5 members)	08	08

3.2
Distribution of the
Beneficiaries
according

to their Project Category (Income Generating Activity)

Distribution of the respondents according to assistance received is shown in table 3. It is apparent from table 3 that 50% of the respondents had received Family Development Plan (FDP), 30% received goat village project, 10% received chicken rearing project and another 10% received cattle rearing project. According to Ashonget *al.* (2010), people chooses various livelihood activities because of their potential to provide good returns while offering them additional time to attend to other livelihood activities

Table 3. Distribution of beneficiaries according to their income generating activity

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Family Development Plan		
Small shop	08	08
Rice from paddy	13	13
Rice flour making	14	14
Home gardening	02	02
Fishing	09	09
Popcorn making	04	04
Goat rearing	30	30
Cattle rearing	10	10
Chicken rearing	10	10

3.3 Training Participation

A number of trainings had been provided by the project implementing agency (World Vision Lanka) in terms of various income generating activities. Number of beneficiaries participated in different training programmes are shown in table 4.

The results reveal that majority of the respondents had received “Start your business (SYB)”and “Business development” trainings. The training given to clients as a part of the livelihood projects provides knowledge to manage their businesses and enhances them during their project activities. Moreover, the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)

program is one of the International Labour Organization's major tools in the field of business development services (Barwa, 2003).

Table 4. Participation in different income generating training programmes

Type of training	Frequency	Percentage
Start Your Business (SYB)	86	86
Grow Your Business (GYB)	66	66
Improve Your Business (IYB)	46	46
Business development	82	82
Goat breeding	29	29

* Multiple responses

3.4 Success Level of Project Activities (continued or discontinued)

The success level of the project, based on whether the beneficiaries are continuing or discontinued the income generating activities is illustrated in table 5. The beneficiaries also asked to response about the effectiveness of the project based on their own experience. Result of the response is also included in the same table.

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents according to their success level

Category	Frequency		Percentage	
	succeed	Not succeed	succeed	Not succeed
Income generating activity				
FDP	82	18	82	18
Goat rearing	87	13	87	13
Cattle rearing	60	40	60	40
Chicken rearing	70	30	70	30
Effectiveness				
Somewhat effective	41		41	
Effective	37		37	
Very effective	04		04	
Not effective	18		18	

Table 5 shows that, 82% of the project beneficiaries was succeeded in the family development plan and 86% succeeded in the goat village project, 60% succeeded in cattle rearing project and 70% succeeded in chicken rearing project. It shows that success level of project activities was higher in goat village project. With regards to effectiveness of the project, based on the beneficiaries' perspectives, majority (82%) of them responded that the project activities were effective.

3.5 Status of Child Well-being

The status of child well-being in the study area was measured by using three Indicators, which include learning opportunities, completion of primary education and ability to care by the parents. Table 6 provides the detail on learning opportunities, in terms of whether the children continuing their learning or dropout from learning in the study area.

Table 6. Distribution of the respondents according to their learning opportunities and completion of primary education

Category	Percentage
Learning opportunities	
Continuing learning	88
Dropout from learning	12
Completion of primary education	
Completed	69
Not completed	31

Table 6 reveals that among the project beneficiaries who had children enrolled in school, majority of the children are continued their learning process without dropping. It is a major positive change made by the livelihood project implemented in the study area. According to the baseline survey report of this particular livelihood project, percentage of children enrolled in school before implementing the project was 51%. Further, table 6 also indicates that 69% of the children completed their primary education during and after the project implementation.

The findings reveal that project made positive impact on child wellbeing, because the situation has improved since joining the livelihood program. Most of the children of the beneficiaries are currently enrolled in a school, which shows the parents' actual success in pursuing the goal of providing a better future for their children.

Beneficiaries were asked whether they can able to manage the needs of their children without any assistance from outside. The response of the beneficiaries is tabulated in table 7.

Table 7. Distribution of the respondents according to ability to care their children

Category	Percentage
Ability to care without assistance	
Yes	67
No	33
Type of items*	
Clothing	71
Supplies for school: Stationeries	30
Toys: bat & ball, doll etc.,	14
Other	06

*Multiple responses

Table 7 shows that more than half of the respondents were able to care their children without assistance. Among them, 71% of the beneficiaries could able to provide clothing needs of their children, 30% of them could able to provide supplies for school stationeries, such as shoes and bag, 13% of them could able to provide toys (bats, balls, dolls, & other) for their children. Despite the provision of free education to children in Sri Lanka, poor households may not be able to pay for the extra essentials for school such as books, bus fares, meals etc. In addition, families with vulnerable groups, including children who suffer from a

disability, and children left behind by migrant mothers, in which case father may not be managing the household income well.

Table 8 provides the summary detail on how the implemented agricultural livelihood project changed the status of child well-being among the rural families in the study area. The comparison is made based on the baseline survey report of the project implementing agency and the findings of the present study.

Table 8.Changes in Child Well-being status

Key aspects	Baseline finding (%)	Present finding (%)	Existing situation compare to last 5 years	Reasons for change
Completion of primary education	43	69	Improved	Changed awareness and attitude Increased family status
Participation in schooling	51	88	Improved	Increased awareness of parents Increased number of school Increased family status Food for education program
Ability of care	41	67	Improved	Increased family status Increased awareness

It is obvious from the table 8 that all aspects of child well-being changed positively during the last 5 years period. There were significant changes occurred due to the implementation of this agricultural livelihood project, in terms of completion rate of children's primary education, enrollment in school and parent's ability to care their children. In general, it was also observed during the study that beneficiaries of the project in the study area had greater satisfaction level regarding the education of their children. It was a great success of the project.

4. CONCLUSION

The agricultural livelihood project has made visible positive changes on status of child well-being among the rural people in Manmunai South West DS Division of Batticaloa District. The study further concluded that majority of the beneficiaries have succeeded in their income generation activities. At this juncture, intensification of the project activities is very much important to sustain or to further improve the status of child well-being among the people in the study area. Therefore, relevant authorities should take necessary arrangements to monitor and look after the needs of these rural people in the study area.

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